

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers November 15, 2004

NETS Feature

Give the Gift of Safety to Your Employees This Holiday Season

Looking for the perfect gift to give your employees thanking them for all of their hard work this year? Let them know you care this holiday season by promoting safe and sober driving messages at the workplace. More.... http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/11_15_04a.asp

Deer Crashes in Michigan

November is always the most dangerous month for car-deer crashes. According to the Michigan State Police, more than 2,000 people were injured in car-deer crashes last year, 11 were killed. The average repair cost has increased more than 10 percent in the past decade and the average cost to repair has escalated to \$2,000. The Michigan Deer Crash Coalition provides the following tips for motorists to minimize their chances of hitting a deer---and staying safe should they hit one:

- Stay aware, awake, alert and sober
- Remember that deer are especially active at dawn and dusk
- Heed deer crossing and speed limit signs, particularly on two-lane roads.
- Always wear your seat belt
- If a crash is unavoidable:
- Don't swerve. Keep your car on the road and in your lane
- Brake firmly and keep hold of the steering wheel
- Bring your vehicle to a controlled stop

Remember, while no one wants to intentionally strike a deer, it is often the safest course of action. Most people are killed or injured when they swerve to avoid a deer and collide with another vehicle or go off the roadway and strike a fixed object, like a tree.

Are Your Teenagers Ready to Hit the Road?

The leading cause of death for teens are motor vehicle crashes. Twenty percent of all 16 year olds will be involved in a motor vehicle crash. Fortunately, Michigan has a graduated licensing law mandating at least 50 hours of driving behind the wheel with a parent or legal guardian before a license is issued, but is that enough? I have three additional resources you should look into if you have a novice driver in your household. NETS National provides a recently edited guide for parents and teenagers entitled, "The Novice Driver's Road Map," and is designed to provide the missing link in a novice driver's education ---practice. The experienced driver or adult coach guides the novice driver and helps them learn to drive in a safe environment. More.... <http://www.trafficsafety.org/Novice.asp> For additional help with your novice driver, a software program was developed by Ford Motor Company in partnership with the Governor's Highway Safety Association called Real World Driver and can be accessed at the following link: www.realworlddriver.com. DaimlerChrysler also has a valuable guide to safely ease teens into driving which is a software program that can be accessed at: www.roadreadyteens.org You can never educate your teen enough before handing the keys over for that 4,000 pound motor vehicle.

Latest Traffic Safety News

National Sleep Awareness Week, March 28-April 3, 2005

Sleep deprivation and sleep disorders are estimated to cost Americans over \$100 billion annually in lost productivity, medical expenses, sick leave, and property and environmental damage (National Sleep Foundation). Use National Sleep Awareness Week 2005 to focus attention on sleep-related issues such as drowsy driving and school start times. For more details and resources on how you can become more involved please link to.... http://www.sleepfoundation.org/features/NSAW_2005.cfm

Report: Safety Technologies Most Desired Feature among Consumers

According to a new report by J.D Power and Associates, technologies that focus on safety are among the most desired features among new-vehicle buyers. Side impact and "smart" airbags generated the most demand from consumers. The report states that the number of buyers showing a strong interest in having side impact airbags on their next vehicle has grown nine percentage points since 2000 to 81 percent in 2004. Other safety features gaining interest include stability control, electronic traction control, and brake assist. Read the press release at

<http://www.jdpower.com/awards/industry/pressrelease.asp?StudyID=916>

Safety Group Petitions Government for Tire Expiration Dates

Consumer safety group, SRS Inc., recently petitioned NHTSA to require that expiration dates be established and printed on car and truck tires. According to leading experts, driving on under-inflated tires causes excessive heat buildup in tires that, over time, can result in damage that can cause tire failure. The group also cites 50 traffic crashes resulting in 37 fatalities caused by older tires with very little wear and tear. According to SRS, tire performance can start to degrade after six years. This is true for tires that haven't been used, as age can impede performance. Despite this warning, there is no data suggesting that a specific age makes a tire less durable. Meanwhile, tire makers are concerned that an expiration date would give consumers a false sense of security that younger tires are safer, regardless of driving conditions. Read the full article at

<http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0411/08/a01-328287.htm>

Majority of Voters Approve Increased Transportation Funding

As congestion continues to clog roadways across the nation, voters who turned out for the 2004 election approved almost 80 percent of transportation tax and bond measures. Limited finances have prompted many state and local governments to ask voters to help pay for light-rail systems, wider highways, and more bus routes. At least 23 of 31 ballot measures to launch or expand bus and rails lines were approved, and 19 of 24 tax and bond measures for roads and bridges were approved. Read the full article at http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-11-04-ballot-usat_x.htm

Zero-Tolerance Law Being Considered to Combat Drugged Driving

Last year more than 1.5 million people were arrested for alcohol impaired driving, but police departments and health specialists across the nation estimate that at least as many people drive under the influence of drugs each year and are rarely prosecuted. Now, a growing number of officials are pressing for zero-tolerance laws that would make it illegal for anyone to drive with any amount of illicit drugs in their system. Currently, only 11 states have such laws. The problem, however, is the lack of a roadside testing device that can quickly detect drugs in a person's body. Read the full article at

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-10-21-cover-drugged-driving_x.htm

Are America's Truck Drivers the Most Monitored Worker?

As concerns over lawsuits grow among private corporate-owned fleets, many are turning to "black box" technology, which can provide insight into the cause of crashes. However, emerging concerns over Hours-of-Service (HOS) compliance have commercial trucking companies considering similar and even more advanced monitoring devices. Advocates claim that black box technology can prevent cheating and make sure drivers get adequate rest. Read the full article at

http://www.landlinemag.com/Archives/2004/Nov2004/news/black_box_debate.htm

Newly Elected GHSA Chair Makes Drowsy Police a Priority

The new chair of the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), Col. Jim Champagne, plans to draw attention to drowsy police as an emerging highway safety issue. According to Champagne, police officers are overworked and in turn, are not getting enough sleep. His remarks came as he outlined his plans and priorities for the organization. For more information visit

http://www.truckinginfo.com/news/news-detail.asp?news_id=52957&news_category_id=18

Ford Tests 'Tubular Air Bag'

Ford Research Laboratory recently announced its plans to test its "tubular air bag"—a new restraint with a standard lap belt and a wider, thicker shoulder belt that would deploy into an air bag during a crash. The undeployed air bag is folded and encased into a modified seat belt. The air bag inflates to a diameter of about six inches and would protect the same area of the vehicle occupant currently covered by a shoulder belt. New crash tests may be required to test the full effectiveness of the new belt. Engineers at Ford also want to ensure that the new belts are comfortable so that vehicle occupants will use them. View the press release at

http://media.ford.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=19396

Misreported Belt Use by Police May Skew Studies

According to a new report by the University of Washington, law enforcement officials may be classifying unbelted crash victim survivors as belted, resulting in exaggerated belt effectiveness in some studies. Examining data from the National Accident Sampling System Crashworthiness Data System (CDS), researchers compared seat belt use reported by CDS investigators and police and found that police misclassified belted occupants 4.2 percent of the time and misclassified unbelted occupants 30.9 percent of the time. The highest agreement was among occupants who died, as researchers found that police assessment of belt use improves as injury severity increases. Reasons for the disparity include: crash victims suffering from minor injuries often exit the vehicle before police arrive and current seat belt laws lead occupants to claim to police that they were wearing their seat belts, even though they were not.

AAA: Limited Auto Repair Choices Affects Safety

A new report by the American Automobile Association (AAA) found that a lack of auto repair choices for drivers could adversely affect safety. According to AAA, a vehicle's diagnostic information is accessible only at auto manufacturer-branded dealerships, inhibiting choice and convenience in auto repair. Experts at AAA claim that consumers may be left stranded when critical safety systems or other components fail. Citing another recent study, AAA states that 59 percent of independent repair technicians had difficulty obtaining accurate and timely repair information and tools from some manufacturers with 73 percent of these shops stating that they encountered this problem every month. View the press release at

http://www.aaamidatlantic.com/safety/release_content.asp?id=1599

AAA, BMW Join Together to Evaluate Effectiveness of Driver Education

Currently, there is no comprehensive set of guidelines for evaluating the many driver education programs available through home schooling, driving schools, and auto clubs. To help fill this gap, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and BMW of North America are co-sponsoring a project to develop evaluation guidelines. The new comprehensive guidelines will be developed by assimilating past evaluations and consulting extensively with various experts. They will also provide options for how to go about evaluating a driver education program. View the press release at <http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=BMW>

NTSB Wants National Crash Data Collection System

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recently recommended that NHTSA and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators develop a procedure to collect, evaluate, and report data on the impact of drivers' medical conditions on traffic crashes. The Board contends that while much information is known and reported on the impact of alcohol on crashes, the extent to which medical impairment contributes to the number of traffic crashes is not well known. View the full article at http://landlinemag.com/todays_news/Daily/2004/Nov04/111004.htm

News from USDOT

FHWA & the Weather Channel Release Safety Video for Holiday Season

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has partnered with The Weather Channel to create a video exploring the effects of weather on highway operations and possible solutions to save lives, time, and money. The video focuses on adverse weather conditions and recognizes the role that technology and Intelligent Transportation Systems—including low visibility warning systems, maintenance decision support systems, and 511. The 30-minute video, entitled "Road Risk" is scheduled to air before the highly traveled Thanksgiving holiday season. For more information and show times visit http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/weather/fhwa_wchannnel.htm

NHTSA Focuses on Seat Belt Use among Pickup Truck Drivers

NHTSA recently released a report examining the seat belt habits of male pickup truck drivers. According to NHTSA, belt use for this group was 69 percent in 2003 compared to 79 percent for drivers of all vehicles. The report includes information on seat belt messages and material developed for Hispanics and non-Hispanics. It also provides background information on belt use rates, laws, and fatality rates, while reviewing current seat belt use campaigns. The information gathered by the study will be used to create future projects. View the full report at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/RuralPickUpTruckupdate/technicalReportPage.htm>

USDOT Announces Grants to University Transportation Centers

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the release of 20 grants totaling \$17.9 million for advanced transportation-related research and transportation workforce development at University Transportation Centers (UTC) nationwide. The funds will support research on improving the nation's transportation systems in areas including safety, security, and efficiency, while generating new leaders to provide solutions for the nation's transportation professionals. View the press release at <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/rsp1204.htm>

NHTSA & RADD Partner to Combat Alcohol Impaired Teen Driving

NHTSA found that in 2003, 25 percent of the 7,884 young drivers who were killed in crashes had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent or higher. Further research revealed that young drivers are less likely to wear seat belts when they have been drinking. In 2003, 65 percent of the young drivers of vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained, and of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 74 percent were unrestrained. To reduce these statistics, the Recording Artists, Actors, and Athletes Against Drunk Driving (RADD) Coalition and NHTSA are launching a new campaign to educate young drivers about underage drinking and driving. The campaign includes the RADD HBO Family documentary, "Smashed: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol." For more information visit

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr10-15-04.html>

International Traffic Safety News

Australian State Releases DVD Documenting Teen Driving Risks

In an effort to educate teen drivers and their parents about the dangers associated with driving, Queensland Government released a DVD documenting how roadway crashes involving young drivers impacted three of the area's families. Entitled "Never the Same Again," the documentary is part of a young driver information kit being made available to local residents. According to Queensland officials, between 1999 and 2003, 402 people aged 17-24 were killed in motor vehicle crashes and 7,095 were injured or hospitalized. Read the full article at <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=3943&db=media> For more information visit

<http://www.neverthesameagain.com.au/>

New Report Focuses on Car Sharing, Car Clubs

The UK Department for Transport has released a report that provides practical advice to public agencies, site managers, community groups, and others on car-sharing and car club programs. The report includes information on technical and management support, staffing requirements, marketing, and monitoring. View the full report at

http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_susttravel/documents/page/dft_susttravel_032631.pdf

UK Study: Car Becomes 'Second Home' as Work Hours Expand

According to UK-based Churchill Insurance, long hours spent at work are forcing many drivers to treat their vehicles as "second homes." The research found that drivers not only use their vehicles to get around, but also as a place to groom themselves as they no longer have time to do so at home.

Churchill Insurance reports that seven million motorists spend almost a month of every year in their car, and a fifth of drivers spend more time in the company of the car radio than with family or friends.

New UK Eyesight Campaign Targets Drivers

According to research conducted by the UK's Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), one in three drivers in the UK—or 13 million people—could be putting themselves and others at risk for a traffic crash because they are driving with poor eyesight. Current UK law allows drivers to go 53 years without having an eye test, but many believe this current standard, introduced in 1935, is dangerously out of date. RNIB research found that 46 percent of 25 to 34 year olds and 40 percent of 35 to 44 year olds have not had their eyes tested in the last two years. Now the RNIB, in conjunction with the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), is working to promote regular eye tests as part of a major eye health awareness campaign.

UK Companies Create Culture of Care to Reduce Crashes

To reduce motor vehicle crashes among their employees, many UK organizations are hoping to improve driver attitudes through the creation of a culture of care based largely on reward and incentive programs. Poor driver attitudes can lead to added wear and tear, greater damage, shorter tire life, breakdowns, and crashes. Companies like UK-based Godfrey Davis Contract Hire are working to create a culture of care and responsibility to reduce these risks. One method is to reward safe drivers with a bonus or incentive, while penalizing drivers who cause crashes.

Canada Releases 2003 Crash Statistics

Transport Canada recently released its statistics on Canadian motor vehicle traffic crashes for 2003. According to the report, collisions and casualties decreased by five percent from the previous year, and injuries were down by three percent. View the full report at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/tp/tp3322/2003/pdf/3322e03s.pdf>

UK Village Removes Road Markings to Improve Driver Safety

The English village of Latton has removed roadway markings in the hopes that it will make drivers more aware of other cars and improve safety. According to architectural designers, the lack of road markings will force drivers to be more on guard while driving. Read the full article at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/wiltshire/3968165.stm

UK Fleets to Drivers: Read the Vehicle Handbook

Leading fleet operators voiced concerns over drivers' lack of knowledge when it comes to new technology and safety devices found on modern vehicles and would like drivers to be forced to read the vehicle handbook of a new car before being allowed to drive it. Fleets voiced these concerns and others at the latest Association of Car Fleet Operators-London West meeting. Vehicle dealers present at the meeting expressed interest in providing such a service, but claimed that they already provided such information and in many cases had to hand over the vehicle to someone other than the driver.

Fleets Attack Management Firms' Standards of Service in the UK

Fleet decision-makers in the UK are attacking the standards of service provided by outsourced fleet management companies and claim their procedures to be a 'total mess' in some instances. A warning was also issued that fleets must ascertain that the service standards can be delivered before signing a contract. According to some decision-makers, poor service is affecting drivers and causing problems for management.